

# TRIBUTE TO HARRIET O'NEILL

• Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on June 20, Texas Supreme Court Justice Harriet O'Neill retired after a judicial career of more than 17 years. On behalf of the people of Texas, I would like to take this time to recognize her many accomplishments.

After graduating with honors from the University of South Carolina School of Law and practicing for a decade in the field of complex business litigation, Justice O'Neill was elected to Texas' 152 District Court in 1992. On that court, her ability to conduct fair and impartial hearings was widely-recognized and won her the praise of lawyers on both sides of the civil bar.

Less than 3 years later, Justice O'Neill's superior record in the district court earned her an appointment and subsequent election to Texas' 14 Court of Appeals. As an appeals court judge, she once again stood out from the crowd. In the words of her colleague, Judge David West, "Harriet was considered one of the most reliable judges we had. . . She was absolutely flawless."

After earning a 91 percent approval rating from the Houston Bar Association, the highest on her nine-member court, the people of Texas elected Justice O'Neill to the Texas Supreme Court in 1998, where she served with honor ever since. In 2002, and again in 2006, the Texas Association of Civil Trial and Appellate Specialists named her the Appellate Justice of the Year. Even more profoundly, in the case of TGS-NOPEC v. Combs, Justice O'Neill broke down a long-term barrier when she became the first woman ever elected to the Texas Supreme Court to preside as Chief Justice.

As a Judge in the Texas Court System, Justice O'Neill has been a model for judicial restraint and faithfully interpreting the law, as written. Her opinions have consistently explained the law and the judicial role in a manner accessible to the general public. Clearly, she has provided an example for all judges to follow.

Justice O'Neill's service to the State of Texas, however, has extended far beyond the courtroom doors. Most admirably, she has been an unwavering champion for the legal rights of our society's most vulnerable citizens.

Since its inception in 2001, Justice O'Neill has been an active member of the Texas Access to Justice Commission. Through her work with this organization, she has helped to develop and implement initiatives designed to ensure that the court system is available to meet the basic legal needs of low-income Texans. In particular, she was heavily involved in creating and distributing a self-help Protective Order Kit that enables victims of domestic violence to file their own applications for court-ordered protection for themselves and their children. Because so many of our most important rights depend upon judicial enforcement, her efforts have ensured that countless Tex-

ans will be able to enjoy the equal justice under the law so central to the American dream.

Justice O'Neill has also worked to protect Texas' most innocent and disadvantaged citizens through serving as the chairwoman of the Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families. After spearheading the creation of this commission in 2007, she has worked tirelessly to strengthen court practices in the Texas child-protection system. Thanks to her efforts, Texas' 30,000 abused and neglected foster children can rest assured that they will be able to look forward to a better tomorrow.

Justice O'Neill's dedication to protecting the vulnerable has also been recognized at the national level. In 2006, she was appointed by Attorney General Alberto Gonzales to serve on the Department of Justice's National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women. In this capacity, she assisted with the implementation of the Violence Against Women Act and supplied policy advice on programs addressing domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. Because these crimes are so heinous and their victims are so defenseless, Justice O'Neill's work in this area is particularly important and praiseworthy.

Although her professional accolades are impressive in their own right, Justice O'Neill's personal accomplishments are equally so. While devoting countless hours to serving the people of Texas, she has simultaneously managed to serve as a loving wife to her husband Kerry and a dedicated mother to her three children. Despite 17 years of full caseloads, she has found the time to stay actively involved with her family, including a tenure coaching her daughters' youth basketball teams. In this busy day and age, Justice O'Neill has provided all of us with an example of what it truly means to fulfill our duty.

While June 20 marked the end of her service on the Texas Supreme Court, I have no doubt that Justice O'Neill will remain active in the causes that she cares so deeply about. On behalf of the people of Texas, I thank her for her many contributions. We can only hope that her next 17 years will be as remarkable.●

# TRIBUTE TO LINDA TYLER

• Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, today I congratulate State Representative Linda Tyler of Conway, who was recently elected by her peers as the majority leader for the Arkansas State House of Representatives. She is the first female elected to the position, and I commend her for this significant achievement.

Along with my staff, I have worked with Representative Tyler on behalf of our constituents, and she has always done an excellent job representing the needs of those in her district. As a small business owner, she knows the

economic challenges that face so many Arkansas families, and she works tirelessly to help them access the resources and help they need.

Along with all Arkansans, I thank Linda and the entire Arkansas Legislature for their leadership and their dedication to keeping our State strong. I also recognize the other representatives who were recently elected to leadership positions:

David "Bubba" Powers, D-District 3, Majority Whip; Charolette Wagner, D-District 17, Secretary; Barbara Nix, D-District 28, Treasurer; Butch Wilkins, D-District 74, 1st District Whip; Fred Allen, D-District 33, 2nd District Whip; Greg Leding, D-District 92, 3rd District Whip; and Johnnie Roebuck, D-District 20, 4th District Whip.●

# TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL K. NEAL

• Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, today I recognize Arkansas wildlife officer Michael K. Neal, who put himself in harm's way earlier this year to save the lives of his fellow law enforcement officers.

Officer Neal is credited by the West Memphis police for stopping a shootout with suspects in the deaths of two of their fellow officers. On May 20, Officer Neal rammed his truck into a van occupied by a father and son suspected of gunning down West Memphis officers Brandon Paudert and Bill Evans during a traffic stop on Interstate 40, before exchanging gunfire with law officers who cornered them in a parking lot.

Officer Neal was one of 13 officers from multiple agencies involved in the shootout, and I commend the bravery and heroism of every law enforcement officer involved in this tragic event. I also send my heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives.

Mr. President, I am also proud that Officer Neal's bravery and heroism were recently honored during a ceremony at the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, where he was presented with the Medal of Valor by Governor Mike Beebe. Officer Neal has received recognition from West Memphis-area legislators, the city of West Memphis and its police department, and by the Crittenden County Quorum Court and sheriff's office.

Officer Neal represents the best of Arkansas, and he is more than deserving of these honors. I commend him for his valor, bravery, and selflessness.●

# 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF BRICKFEST

• Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, today I congratulate the residents of Malvern in my home State of Arkansas as they celebrate the 30th anniversary of Brickfest, a time-honored tradition that commemorates the importance of brick production to the history of the city of Malvern and Hot Spring County. Abundant clay in the area makes it a prime location for brick production, and since 1887, the industry has played a leading role in the area's economic development.